Invitation to tender - Safe Surgeries Programme Evaluation

Summary

This document invites proposals to undertake an evaluation of the Safe Surgeries Programme, run by Doctors of the World UK across England.

About Doctors of the World UK

Part of the international Medecins du Monde network, Doctors of the World UK (DOTW UK) works to reduce health inequalities by focusing on frontline support and long-term structural change. Access to healthcare is a human right and yet several groups in our society face systemic exclusion.

In the UK we run clinical, non-clinical and advocacy programmes to support excluded groups to access healthcare. Our clinical and non-clinical services support people with health assessments and provide GP registration support. Our evidence-based advocacy programmes are founded on the evidence gathered by our frontline teams. We support patients on the ground while addressing the root cause of the problem; we engage with policymakers, Local Authorities, Commissioners, NHS bodies and GP practices.

We have a strong track record of driving positive changes to migrant health policy and informing public debates on the topic. In 2018, we ran the successful #stopsharing campaign, which stopped a data sharing agreement between the NHS and the Home Office, and our policy work has been successful in increasing the range of NHS services all migrants can access free of charge.

About this project

NHS England provides guidance to GP practices in relations to GP registration. According to this guidance, there are no regulatory requirements for prospective patients to produce identity documents, proof of address or to provide proof of immigration status when registering with a GP.

However, our patients still face many barriers when they try to access primary care. Despite NHS England guidance, many are still refused registration because they are unable to provide proof of residency, ID or immigration status. Beyond registration, patients may also face challenges related to language barriers, digital exclusion, a lack of understanding of their healthcare entitlements, concerns about charging or data sharing, and difficulties navigating an increasingly complex healthcare system and appointment booking system.

Safe Surgeries developed in response to the barriers faced by the people who access our frontline services, to support primary care staff to better understand NHS England guidance and make primary care safer and accessible to all patients, regardless of their immigration status or ability to produce documents.

The initiative has been running since in 2018 under the coordination of DOTW UK and it aims to build a network of GP practices working to address barriers to healthcare access for health inclusion groups. GP practices that sign up to become Safe Surgeries therefore commit to taking active steps towards ensuring they are accessible and their policies and practices align with NHS England guidance.

As part of the Safe Surgeries offer, DOTW provides advice, free training sessions and e-learning material, toolkits, posters and translated materials that GP practices can use to foster inclusivity, upskill staff and remove barriers to registrations. Safe Surgeries resources and training materials are usually developed with clinicians and nurses.

The Safe Surgeries network includes 2,867 GP practices, approximately 46% of all practices in England (signed up between 2018 and present). The programme is voluntary; GP practices are not offered any financial incentive to join.

Safe Surgeries runs in partnership with commissioning bodies (ICBS), Local Authorities, PCNs and Health Inclusion Leads, who support the local expansion and uptake of the programme.

The Safe Surgeries programme has never been subject to a formal evaluation. Although it is widely recognised and valued across the sector, we would like to assess whether it is achieving its intended outcomes, determine which components of the programme are most effective, and identify the most successful approaches to sustaining engagement over time. This is particularly important given that some practices that joined the network in its early years may no longer be actively engaged with the programme.

Aim of the Project

We are seeking a skilled and experienced consultant to undertake an independent evaluation of the Safe Surgeries programme.

The evaluation should assess:

- The continued relevance of the Safe Surgeries model within the current primary care and policy landscape.
- The extent to which the programme contributes to improving access to primary care for patients who face barriers to registration and healthcare access.
- The effectiveness of the different elements of the programme: training, e-learning, resources, partnership working and network engagement.
- Strengths and limitations of the current model.
- Opportunities for further development to ensure the programme remains impactful, relevant and sustainable in the future.

The evaluation should generate practical recommendations that will inform the future direction of the programme and support strategic decision-making.

Indicative Evaluation Questions

Relevance

- To what extent does the Safe Surgeries programme continue to address current barriers to primary care access experienced by health inclusion groups?
- How relevant is the programme to GP practices, commissioners, local authorities and other stakeholders?
- How has the changing NHS and primary care landscape affected the programme's relevance, expansion and delivery?

Effectiveness and Impact

- What changes, if any, has Safe Surgeries contributed to within participating GP practices?
- Which aspects of the programme are viewed as most useful and impactful by participating practices? Which aspects contribute to sustainable change?
- To what extent has the programme increased awareness and understanding of NHS registration guidance?

- What evidence is there that the programme has reduced barriers to registration and access for patients?
- What unintended outcomes, positive or negative, have emerged?

Reach and Engagement

- How effectively does the programme engage practices after initial sign-up?
- What factors support or hinder sustained engagement with the programme?
- What does effective and meaningful engagement mean for GP practices, both with clinical and admin staff?
- How do practices use the training, resources and support provided?

Future Development

- How could the programme evolve to maximise its impact over the next 3-5 years?
- What opportunities exist to strengthen engagement and implementation?
- What opportunities exist to improve patient's experience of primary care once registered?
- What delivery models or approaches should DOTW consider in the future?

The Methodology

We welcome proposals from consultants with expertise in health inequalities, primary care, organisational development, programme evaluation or related fields.

We encourage bidders to propose an appropriate methodology. We anticipate this may include a combination of:

- Desk review of programme documentation, monitoring data and resources.
- Review of existing evidence, data and literature relevant to barriers to primary care access and inclusion health.
- Interviews and/or focus groups with key stakeholders.
- Surveys of Safe Surgeries practices.
- Case studies of selected practices and local partnerships.

The successful consultant will be expected to work collaboratively with DOTW to finalise the evaluation framework and methodology. The consultant will lead the design and delivery of the evaluation, while DOTW will provide reasonable support with stakeholder engagement and data collection activities where appropriate. This may include distributing surveys through existing networks, facilitating introductions to stakeholders and partners, supporting the recruitment of interview or focus group participants, and providing access to relevant programme documentation and monitoring data.

Outputs

The successful consultant will be expected to deliver:

Inception Phase

- Inception meeting with DOTW.

- Detailed evaluation framework and workplan.
- Agreed methodology and data collection tools.

Final Deliverables

- A comprehensive evaluation report (approximately 15 pages).
- Executive summary suitable for external audiences.
- Practical and prioritised recommendations for programme development.

The final report should clearly distinguish between findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Timeline

Milestone	Indicative Date
Invitation to Tender issued	30 October 2026
Deadline for proposals	27 November 2026
Consultant appointed	End of December 2026
Inception meeting	January 2027
Data collection	January-March 2027
Draft report	April 2027

Budget

Thre budget for this project is £8,000 (VAT included).
Proposals should include a breakdown of costs, including consultant day rates and estimated number of days needed to complete the project.

Project Management

The consultant will report to the Safe Surgeries Lead & Senior Policy & Advocacy Manager at Doctors of the World UK.

DOTW will provide:

- Review of existing evidence, data and literature relevant to barriers to primary care access and inclusion health.
- Relevant project documentation and monitoring data.
- Introductions to key stakeholders where appropriate.
- Feedback on draft deliverables.
- Support with recruitment of participants for interviews and focus groups
- Support with survey distribution to existing Safe Surgeries, partners and networks
- Assisting with scheduling stakeholder interviews and focus groups where required.
- Promoting evaluation activities through newsletters and other communication channels.

The consultant will be responsible for ensuring compliance with relevant data protection and ethical requirements.

Proposal Information

Proposals should include:

Organisational Information

- Name of consultant/organisation.
- Lead contact details.
- Relevant experience.

Technical Proposal

- Understanding of the assignment.
- Proposed methodology.
- Project plan and timeline.
- Risks and mitigation measures.

Relevant Experience

Please provide examples of up to three relevant evaluations, preferably relating to:

- Health inequalities.
- Primary care.
- Public health.
- Organisational or network-based programmes.

Budget

Detailed budget breakdown. Evaluation Criteria Proposals will be assessed against:

Criteria	Weighting
Understanding of the brief & ability to meet deadline	20%
Quality and appropriateness of methodology	35%
Relevant experience	25%
Value for money	20%

Contact Information

Enquiries about this brief should be addressed to Valentina D'Orazio vdorazio@doctorsoftheworld.org.uk

For further information about DOTW UK and our work, please visit www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/